

Perception of the locals towards the image of the spa and their intention to visit

ABSTRACT

The spa industry has been one of the most successful attractions having the potential to be a lucrative sector in the future and is expected to make tourism industry the main fifth revenue earner for the Malaysia by the year 2020. The Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC) in Malaysia has set up a Transformation Plan 2020 to achieve 36 million tourist arrival and aim to receive RM168 billion by the year 2020. MOTAC also predicted the spa industry will provide about 3,540 jobs by 2020. In Malaysia, this industry is still in its infancy stage but being one of the emerging industries globally, has huge setbacks which need to be given attention to. However, the wrong impression about the image of the spa industry is the main problem face by the spa operators. The general perception of the public tends to think that this industry is comparable to a prostitution joint. If MOTAC intends to make the spa industry as the fifth income earner for the country, a study to change the local community perception about the image of the spa and to encourage them to visit and work in the spa is of high importance. This research has explored the perceptions of the local community towards the image of the spa in Malaysia with Sabah in particular. As this is an exploratory research, qualitative method is used for this study. The result of the research suggests that there is dynamic change in the perception towards the image of the spa industry in Sabah from mainly negative to mainly positive.